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TIPTON
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STAR TREK THE NEXT GENERATION® / DOCTOR WHO

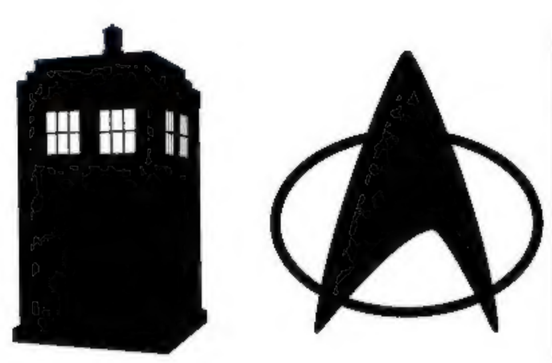
ASSIMILATION²

The story so far...

The Doctor is an alien, the last of the powerful Time Lords. He is an intrepid traveller through time and space, armed only with his incredible intelligence and his fix-anything sonic screwdriver. He travels alone, except for the human companions he befriends, briefly sharing his life with them and showing them the astonishing wonders of the universe.

Space... the Final Frontier. These are the voyages of the *Starship Enterprise*. Its continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before.

After reluctantly allowing a Borg drone known as the Conduit aboard the *Enterprise*, Captain Picard and the Doctor learned how the Cybermen turned on their Borg allies. Now, the Doctor's plan to free the Borg has put him and his companions right in the middle of one of the Federation's worst defeats and face to face with Picard's assimilated form, Locutus...



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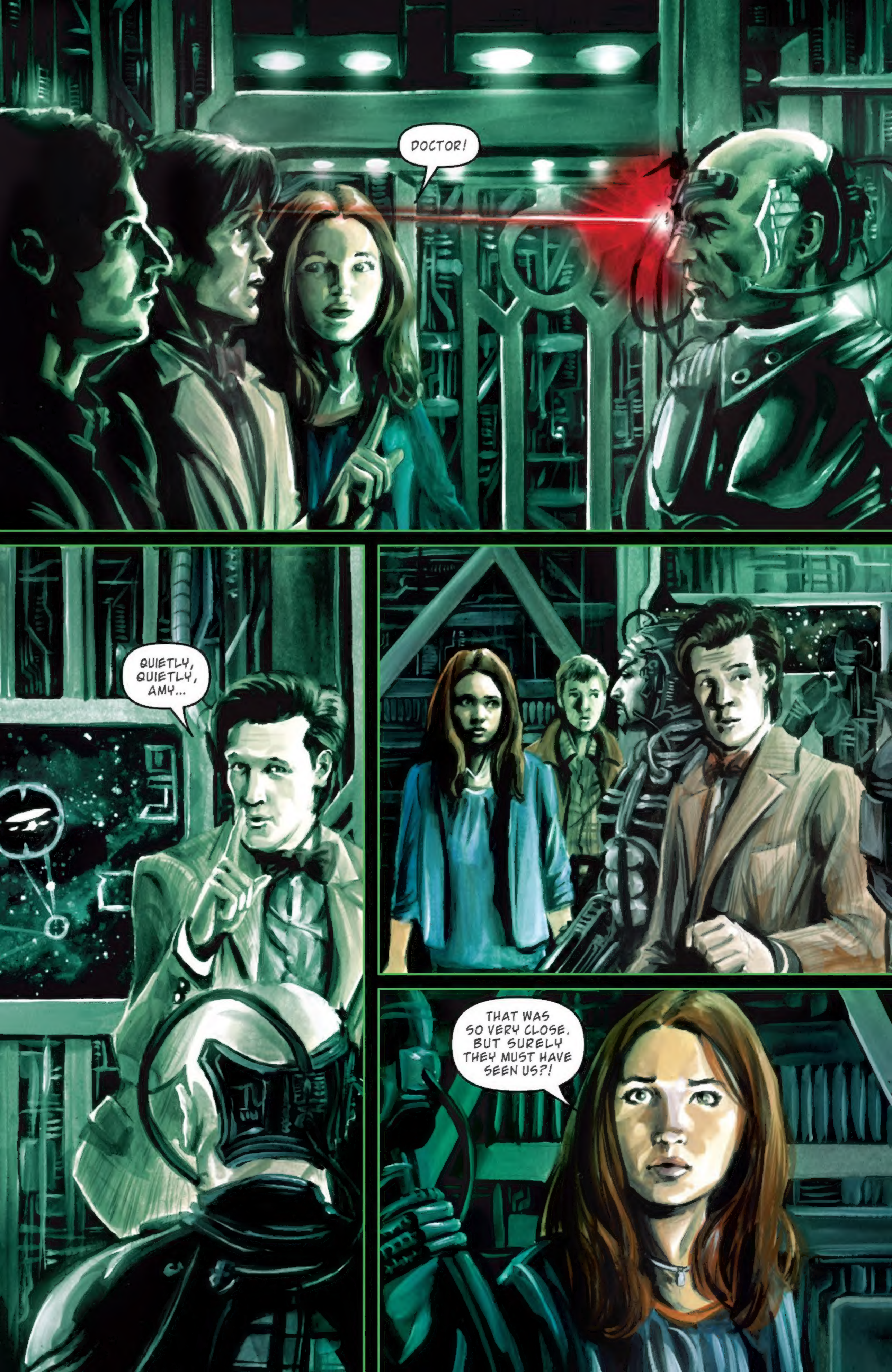

DOCTOR!
QUIETLY, QUIETLY, AMY...
THAT WAS SO VERY CLOSE. BUT SURELY THEY MUST HAVE SEEN US?!

"BUT THE MEMORY OF WHAT THE BORG WILL FORCE PICARD TO DO HERE TODAY WILL CONTINUE TO TORMENT HIM FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE."

HOLD ON, POND, STAY STILL JUST A MOMENT... LONGER... THEN WE'LL BE ON ON OUR WAY.
—EEP
THEY SEEM SO... SINGLE-MINDED.
ALMOST PEACEFUL. WATCHING THEM PREPARE FOR BATTLE LIKE THIS GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
THAT CALM COMES AT THE PRICE OF THEIR FREE WILL.
THE COLLECTIVE SUPPRESSES THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES OF THESE DRONES.
THE PROCESS OF ASSIMILATION LIMITS THEIR ABILITIES TO HAVE INDIVIDUAL EMOTIONS. EVERYTHING REVOLVES AROUND THE NEEDS OF THE HIVEMIND.
DO DRONES EVER BREAK FREE—ESCAPE THE BORG COLLECTIVE?
VERY SELDOM. CAPTAIN PICARD IS A RARE EXCEPTION, AND HE HAD ASSISTANCE.
THE COLLECTIVE SO EFFECTIVELY MANIPULATES THE DECISION-MAKING AND PLEASURE CENTERS OF THE BRAIN THAT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ASSIMILATED DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE. THEY WOULD RATHER FIGHT OR DIE FIRST.
BUT... THAT'S SLAVERY.

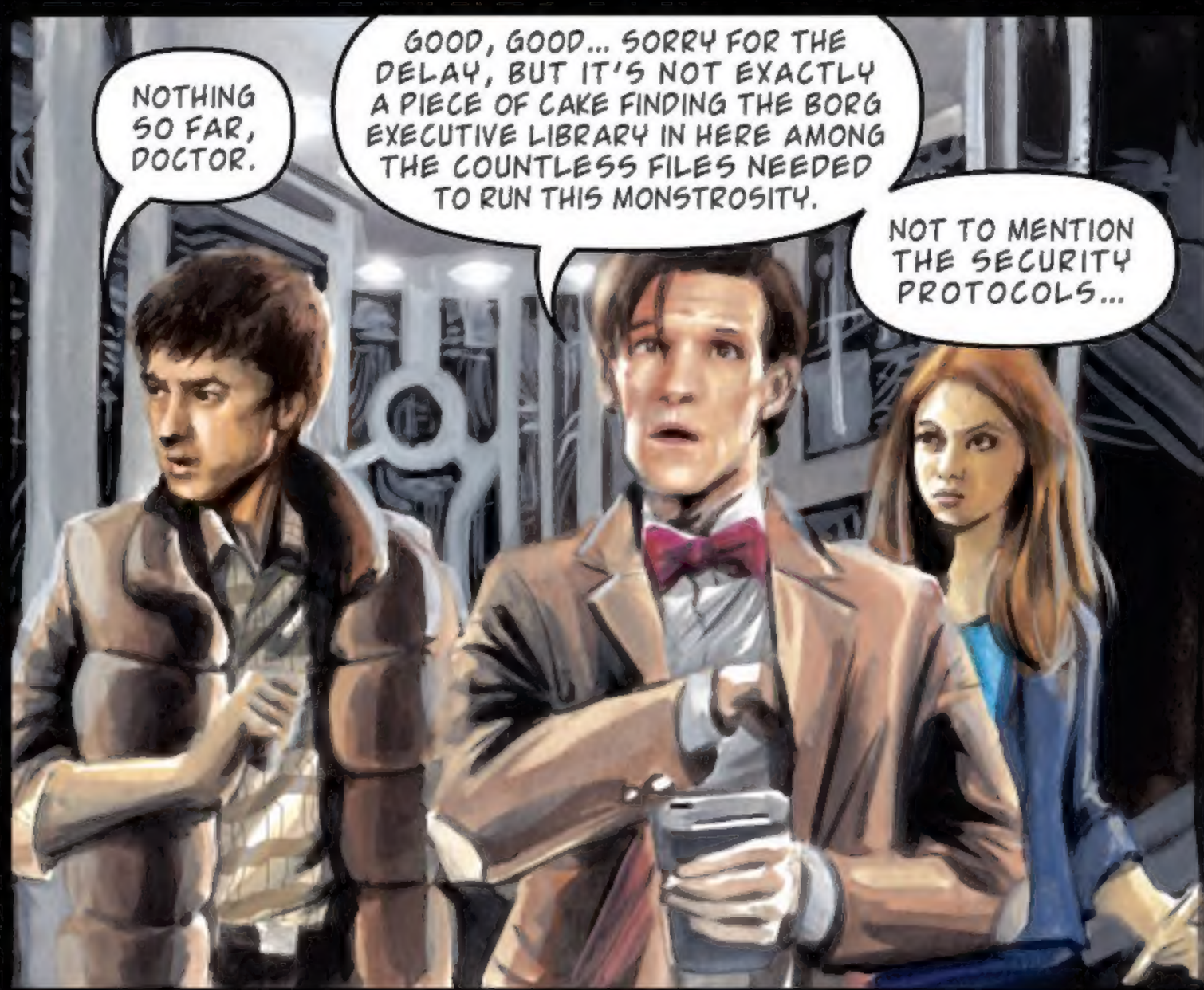
IT'S SLAVERY, ALL RIGHT. SLAVERY FROM THE INSIDE, A MOST DEVIOUS FORM OF BONDAGE. LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT THE VERY NATURE OF THE SOUL—

BREE-DEET
AH!
BUT NOW MAY NOT BE THE TIME TO DISCUSS THE PHILOSOPHICAL COMPLEXITIES. WE'RE HERE TO PERFORM A TASK, AND ACCORDING TO MR. DATA'S HANDY LITTLE GADGET HERE, THE PATH IS NOW CLEAR FOR US TO MOVE FORWARD.

COME ON! DOWN THIS CORRIDOR.

HOLD UP! THIS IS IT!

KEEP AN EYE OUT, PONDS! MEDDLING WITH THIS PARTICULAR PANEL MAY WELL BE ENOUGH TO MAKE US A THREAT, AND I'D LIKE TO AVOID THAT, FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS.

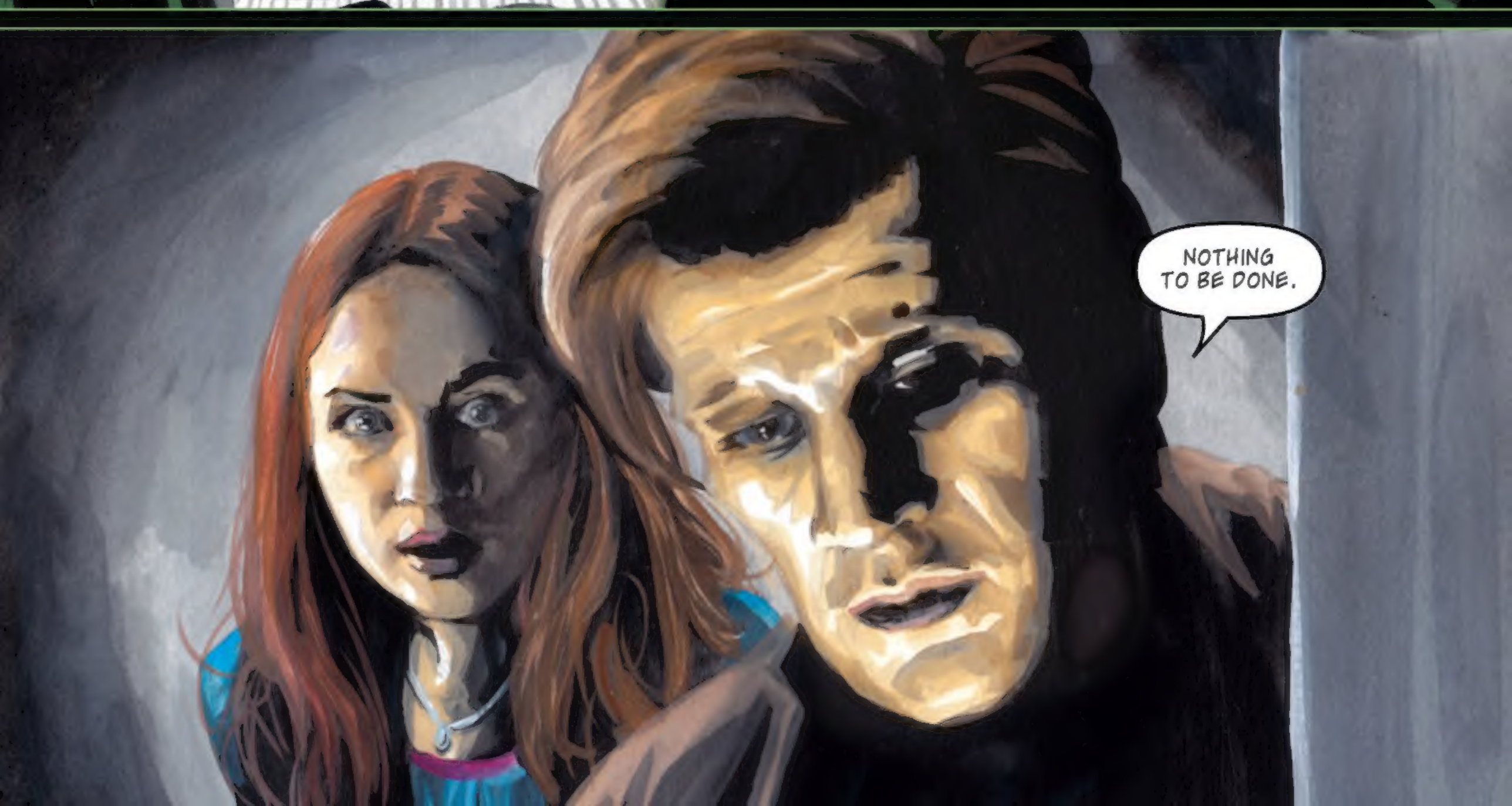

NOTHING SO FAR, DOCTOR.
GOOD, GOOD... SORRY FOR THE DELAY, BUT IT'S NOT EXACTLY A PIECE OF CAKE FINDING THE BORG EXECUTIVE LIBRARY IN HERE AMONG THE COUNTLESS FILES NEEDED TO RUN THIS MONSTROSITY.
NOT TO MENTION THE SECURITY PROTOCOLS...

MORE OF THEM, DOCTOR! HERE THEY COME!

ALMOST FOUND IT... GETTING CLOSE.
I HOPE YOU FIND IT SOON, DOCTOR. NOT LIKING THIS...
I'VE GOT IT. I'M COPYING THE BORG EXECUTIVE ROUTINES NOW.
FINALLY. WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T LET THEM KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
NOW, RORY, YOU KNOW HOW CAREFUL I AM ABOUT THIS SORT OF THING.
YES, USUALLY THINGS DO TURN OUT WELL.
EXCEPT FOR THE TIME I WAS KILLED, OR TRANSFORMED INTO A PLASTIC ROMAN. I'M JUST SAYING THAT THIS IS A GOOD TIME FOR SOME EXTRA CAUTION.
I HEAR YOU. I THINK WE'RE DONE HERE. ARE YOU TWO READY?

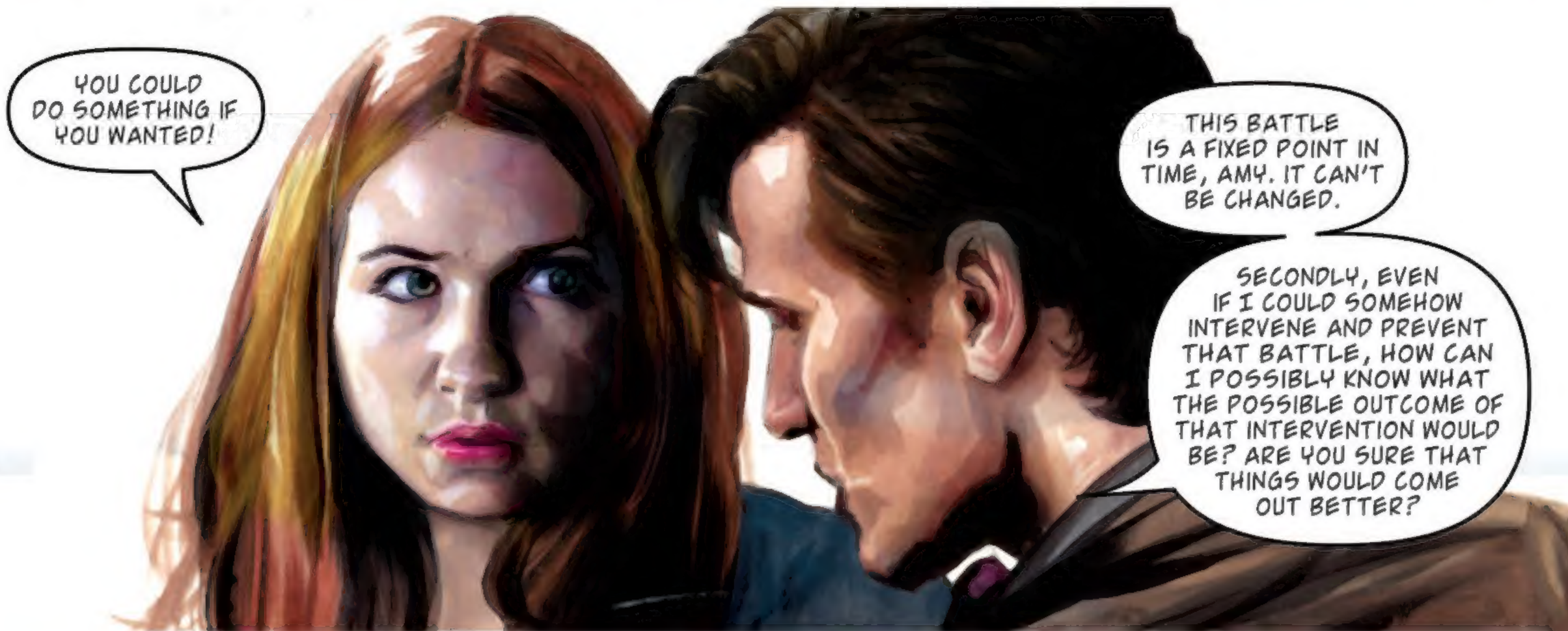
LET'S SLIP BACK THROUGH HERE AND WE'LL BE OUT OF HERE IN NO TIME.
DOCTOR, LOOK. THE BATTLE IS UNDERWAY NOW.

HOW MANY LIVES DID COMMANDER RIKER SAY WERE LOST?
ELEVEN THOUSAND.

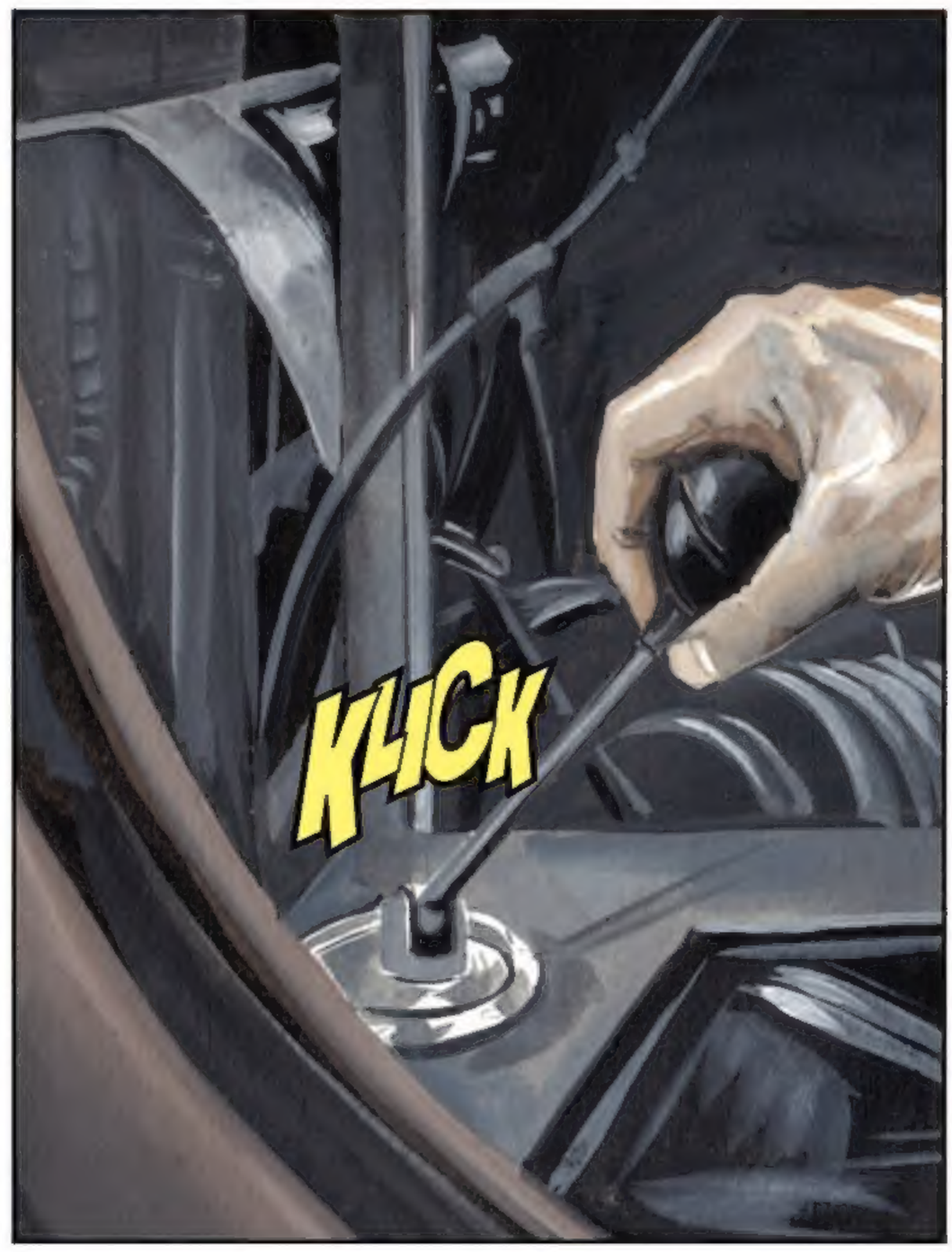

NOTHING TO BE DONE.

TIME TO DEPART. EVERYBODY READY?
DOCTOR!

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE DYING OUT THERE. WHY CAN'T WE DO SOMETHING?
YOU HAVE TO LET IT GO, AMY. THE PAST IS THE PAST.


YOU COULD DO SOMETHING IF YOU WANTED!
THIS BATTLE IS A FIXED POINT IN TIME, AMY. IT CAN'T BE CHANGED.
SECONDLY, EVEN IF I COULD SOMEHOW INTERVENE AND PREVENT THAT BATTLE, HOW CAN I POSSIBLY KNOW WHAT THE POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF THAT INTERVENTION WOULD BE? ARE YOU SURE THAT THINGS WOULD COME OUT BETTER?

WE HAVE OUR OWN CATASTROPHE TO PREVENT, AND I CAN'T LET ANYTHING GET IN THE WAY OF THAT. WITH LUCK, WHAT WE HAVE HERE WILL RESTORE THE BORG AND STOP THE PLANS OF THE CYBERMEN.


KLICK

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY WHEN I'D BE HAPPY TO HEAR THAT WE CAN HELP OUT THE BORG.

WELL DONE, DOCTOR. LET'S CHECK IN WITH COMMANDER LA FORGE'S PROGRESS ON GETTING US TO THE CYBERMAN FLEET IN TIME TO PUT IT TO USE.

GOOD NEWS, COMMANDER.

THE DOCTOR HAS ACQUIRED THE BORG EXECUTIVE ROUTINES. WE'LL BE ABLE TO RESTORE THE BORG COLLECTIVE.

CAPTAIN. GLAD TO HEAR IT, BUT IT MAY NOT BE OF ANY USE. I'M AFRAID I HAVE VERY BAD NEWS, SIR.

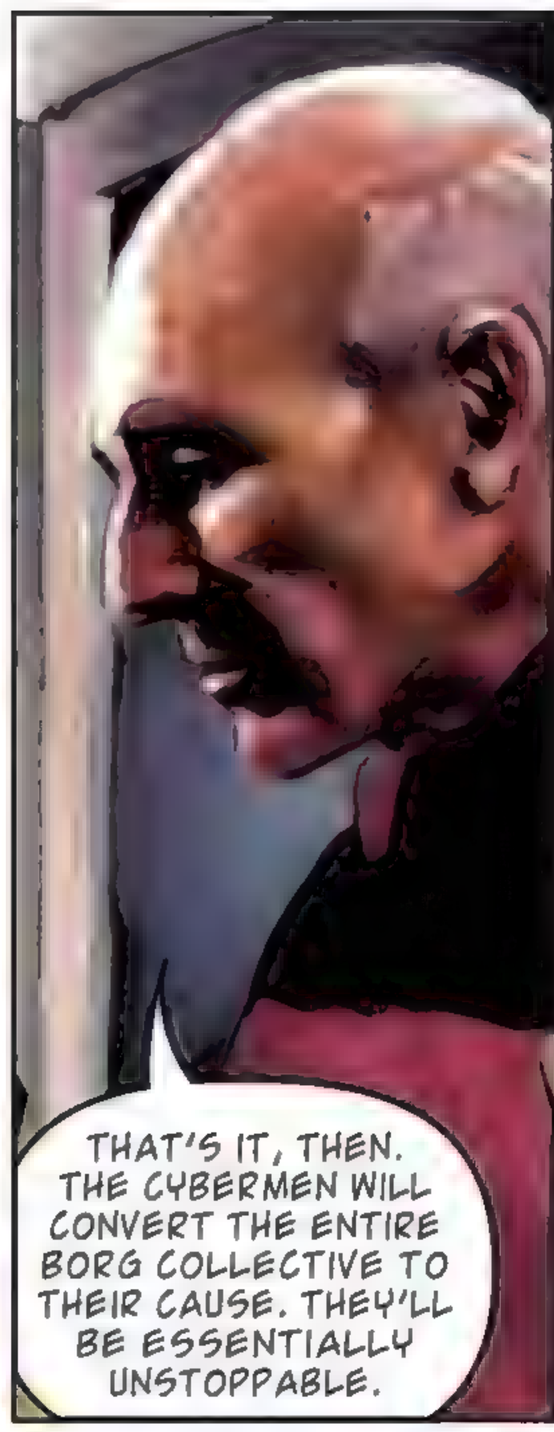
WITH THE HELP OF OUR BORG FRIEND HERE, I'VE GOTTEN EVERY LAST BIT OF EFFICIENCY OUT OF THE *ENTERPRISE'S* ENGINES, WELL PAST ANYTHING WE'VE EVER ACHIEVED BEFORE. WE'VE DONE EVERYTHING WE CAN...

BUT IN EVERY SIMULATION, IT'S JUST NOT ENOUGH. THEY HAVE TOO MUCH OF A LEAD, AND WE CAN'T CATCH UP.

THEN WE'VE LOST. IF WE CAN'T STOP OR SLOW DOWN THAT SHIP, THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN REACTIVATE THE BORG COLLECTIVE BEFORE THE CYBERMEN ARRIVE AT THE BORG HOMEWORLD.

GEORDI, DO YOU HAVE ***ANY*** OTHER OPTIONS?

I'M SORRY, CAPTAIN. WE'RE UP AGAINST THE LAWS OF PHYSICS.
THAT CYBERSHIP IS JUST TOO FAR AHEAD OF US AND MOVING TOO QUICKLY FOR THE *ENTERPRISE* TO CATCH IT IN TIME.


THAT'S IT, THEN. THE CYBERMEN WILL CONVERT THE ENTIRE BORG COLLECTIVE TO THEIR CAUSE. THEY'LL BE ESSENTIALLY UNSTOPPABLE.

A-HA! I HAVE ANOTHER OPTION, CAPTAIN.
THE *TARDIS* IS FAST, FAR FASTER THAN ANY OF YOUR SHIPS. WE WON'T BREAK THE LAWS OF PHYSICS, WE'LL JUST BEND THEM A LITTLE.
WE CAN TAKE A SMALL GROUP OF US INTO THE TARDIS, CATCH THE CYBERSHIP. SABOTAGE! WE'LL FIND A WAY TO DISABLE THEIR ENGINE SO THE *ENTERPRISE* CAN CATCH THEM.

YOUR LITTLE BOX AGAINST THAT SHIP, DOCTOR? I'M NOT SURE I LIKE THESE ODDS.
MY LITTLE BOX HAS BEEN PLACES YOU'VE NEVER DREAMED, CAPTAIN. WE'LL SLIP INSIDE THE CYBERSHIP UNDETECTED.
WE WERE GOING TO HAVE TO BOARD THEIR VESSEL ONE WAY OR ANOTHER ANYWAY.
TO RESTORE THE BORG FROM THEIR STUPOR, WE MUST HAVE ACCESS TO THE CYBERMAN COMPUTERS TO COPY THE EXECUTIVE CODE BACK INTO THE COLLECTIVE.

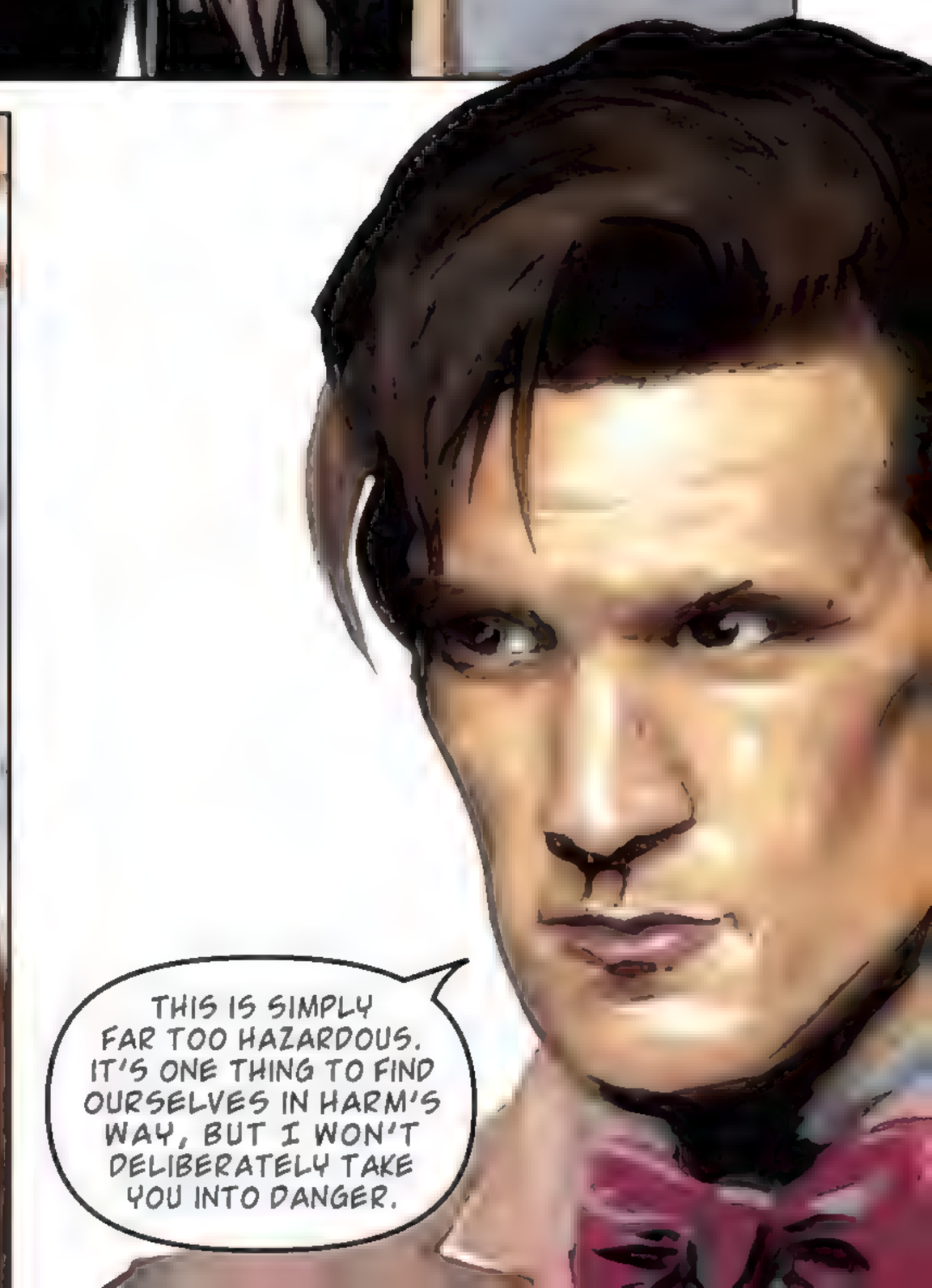
VERY WELL. WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVES. LET'S GET STARTED.

YOU WANTED TO DO THIS ALL ALONG, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU KNOW ME, POND, ALWAYS BEST TO BE PREPARED.
THIS *ENTERPRISE* IS A FINE VESSEL, BUT IF WE'RE FLYING INTO THE ABYSS, I KNOW WHAT SHIP I WANT BENEATH MY FEET.

MR. WORF.
ASSEMBLE A SECURITY TEAM AND MEET US IN WEAPONS ROOM THREE.
I WANT FULL TACTICAL GEAR PREPARED FOR OUR INCURSION TO THE CYBERMEN'S VESSEL.
ON OUR WAY, CAPTAIN.

DOCTOR, THIS COURSE OF ACTION IS EXCEEDINGLY HAZARDOUS.
I TEND TO AGREE, CAPTAIN PICARD. AMY, RORY—I'M AFRAID I CAN'T LET YOU ACCOMPANY US.

WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!


THIS IS SIMPLY FAR TOO HAZARDOUS. IT'S ONE THING TO FIND OURSELVES IN HARM'S WAY, BUT I WON'T DELIBERATELY TAKE YOU INTO DANGER.

FORGET IT, MISTER.

WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO, JUST TWIDDLE OUR THUMBS AND WAIT FOR YOU TO COME BACK? THIS IS WHAT WE DO.

IT REALLY IS A LITTLE LATE FOR THIS SORT OF CONCERN, DOCTOR.

FAIR ENOUGH! HAD TO TRY! SORRY, CAPTAIN, THEY'LL BE COMING ALONG!

COMMANDER? YOU WANTED TO SPEAK WITH ME?

YES, DR. CRUSHER. HANG BACK FOR A MOMENT.

THE CONDUIT IS GOING WITH YOU ON THE STRIKE TEAM? WHAT FOR?

HE LITERALLY *IS* THE CONDUIT. WE HAVE TO ROUTE THE BORG EXECUTIVE PROTOCOLS THROUGH HIM AND INTO THE CYBERMEN'S SHIP TO TRANSMIT THEM BACK TO THE COLLECTIVE AND GET THEM OUT OF THE CYBERMEN'S CONTROL.

DR., ABOUT THE CONDUIT— CAPTAIN BERTRAND.

IS THERE ANY WAY TO RECOVER HIM FROM THIS... THIS WALKING NIGHTMARE? AFTER ALL, YOU WERE ABLE TO SAVE THE CAPTAIN.

"IT'S POSSIBLE. BUT IT DEPENDS AS MUCH ON HIM AS IT DOES OUR EFFORTS. CAPTAIN PICARD WAS ABLE TO FIGHT THE BORG'S PROGRAMMING, WHICH WAS WHAT ENABLED US TO REACH HIM. THAT MIGHT NOT BE SOMETHING EVERYONE IS CAPABLE OF."

THE MAN WAS MY FRIEND, BEVERLY.

HE HAS TO WANT TO COME BACK TO US, WILL. ALL WE CAN DO IS TRY WHEN ALL THIS IS OVER.

THESE WEAPONS HAVE BEEN MODIFIED ACCORDING TO OUR OWN RECORDS FROM OUR PREVIOUS ENCOUNTERS WITH THE BORG, AS WELL AS THE DATA PROVIDED BY THE CONDUIT REGARDING THE CYBERMEN'S ADOPTION OF BORG SHIELDING TECHNOLOGY.
THEY SHOULD PROVIDE US WITH THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND LONGEST-LASTING EFFICIENCY AGAINST THE ENEMY.

THANK YOU, LIEUTENANT.
I'D LIKE TO RENEW MY OBJECTION TO YOUR LEADING THE STRIKE TEAM PERSONALLY, CAPTAIN.
THE POTENTIAL FOR—
THE MATTER IS SETTLED, NUMBER ONE. THE DECISION TO COOPERATE WITH THE BORG WAS MINE ALONE. I'LL NOT HAVE YOU OR ANYONE ELSE FACING THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RAMIFICATIONS OF MY DECISION.

THE OPERATION OF THE TYPE-III PHASER RIFLE IS SIMPLE, BUT STILL REQUIRES CARE AND FOCUS. JUST BELOW THE REAR HANDGRIP IS—
NO, NO, NO! ABSOLUTELY NOT! NO GUNS!

GOING INTO THIS MISSION UNARMED IS TANTAMOUNT TO SUICIDE.
GUNS MAKE YOU STUPID. WE'LL GET ALONG JUST FINE WITHOUT THEM, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

FOLLOW AT ALL SPEED, NUMBER ONE, BUT BE PREPARED TO RETURN AND MARSHAL MORE OF STARFLEET'S FORCES SHOULD YOU LOSE CONTACT WITH US.

AYE, SIR.

RIGHT THIS WAY, IF YOU PLEASE, GENTLEMEN?

WHAT TRICKERY IS THIS?

MOST REMARKABLE!

YES, YES, BIGGER ON THE INSIDE, HOW CAN THIS BE, LET'S SKIP AHEAD, SHALL WE? MUCH TO DO.

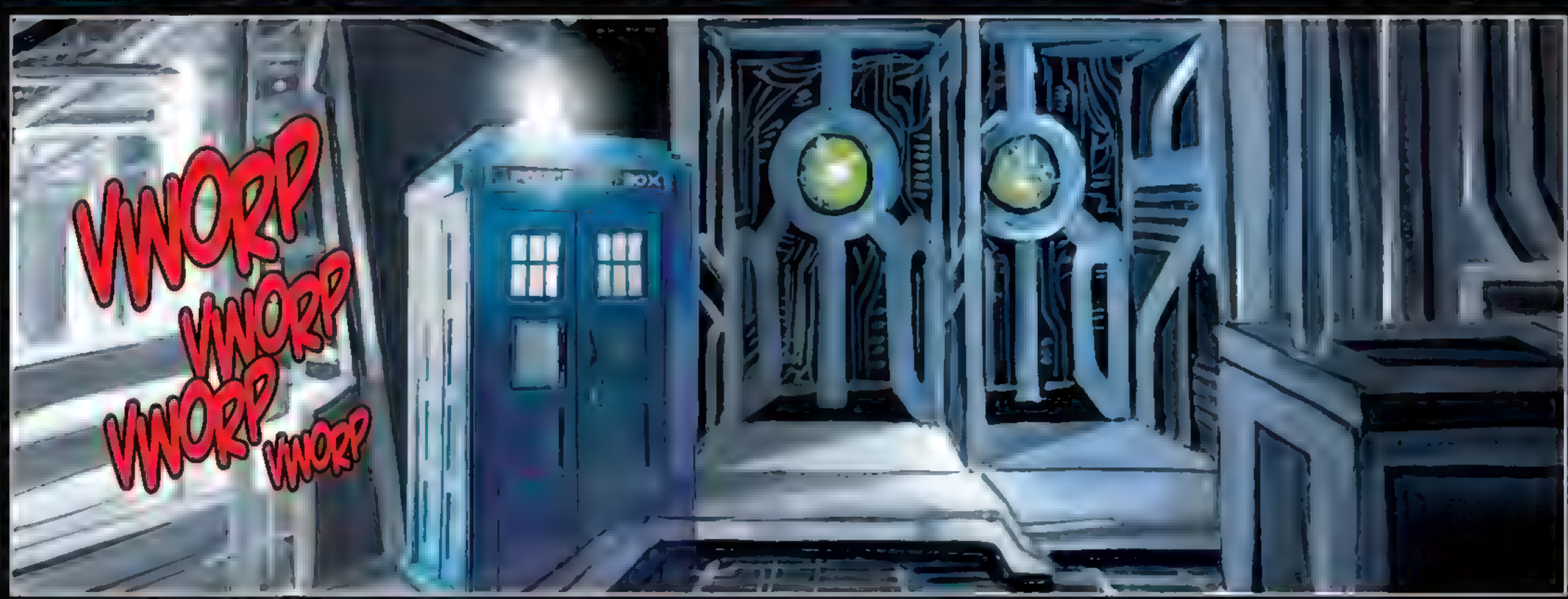
AM I TO ASSUME THAT THE VESSEL SOMEHOW MAKES USE OF DIMENSIONAL SHIFTING SO AS TO CREATE AN EXPONENTIALLY LARGER INTERIOR? MOST EFFICIENT, DOCTOR.

SPOT-ON, COMMANDER DATA. A GENUINE PLEASURE TO HAVE SOMEONE ABOARD WHO'S SO QUICK ON THE UPTAKE!

HEY!

NOW THEN, LET'S BE ON OUR WAY! WE HAVE SOME TIME TO MAKE UP.

THE CYBER-ARMADA...



INTRUDER ALERT!
INTRUDER ALERT!
INTRUDER ALERT!
THIS WAY!
YOU HEARD THE MAN! LET'S MOVE!
BRVRRT
BRVRRT
LOOK OUT!
QUICKLY!
WE CAN TAKE AN ALTERNATE ROUTE! THIS WAY!
PICARD TO WORF! REPORT!
EVERYONE HERE IS UNHARMED, CAPTAIN. AND YOU?
BRVRRT
WE'RE FINE. LIEUTENANT, FIND YOUR WAY TO ENGINEERING AND FIND A WAY TO SLOW THIS SHIP DOWN! WE'LL HEAD TO THE BRIDGE AS PLANNED.
BRVRRT
BRVRRT
AYE, SIR.

INTRUDER ALERT!
INTRUDER ALERT!
INTRUDER ALERT!
SO MUCH FOR THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE, EH, DOCTOR?
NOT TO WORRY, CAPTAIN, I'VE BEEN IN TOUGHER SPOTS THAN THIS. NONE SPRING TO MIND AT THIS VERY MOMENT, BUT I'M CONFIDENT IT'S TRUE.

DAMN! THEY'RE TRYING TO CUT US OFF!
MR. DATA, IS THERE ANOTHER ALTERNATE ROUTE?
THAT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY, CAPTAIN.

HURRY... CAPTAIN...
KRRRRNNNNNNK

KRRRNNNNNNK
QUICKLY, QUICKLY!
DATA? HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET YOU OUT OF THERE?
NOT TO... WORRY, CAPTAIN. IF THE THREE OF YOU WOULD... STAND CLEAR...
KABOOM
SIMPLY MARVELOUS, MR. DATA! YOU ARE INDEED A WONDER!
AND MOST FOOLHARDY, COMMANDER.
NOT AT ALL, CAPTAIN.
I CALCULATED THE APPROXIMATE WEIGHT OF THE DOOR BASED ON A VISUAL ESTIMATION OF ITS CONSTRUCTION AND CONCLUDED THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD IT FOR A TIME SUFFICIENT FOR US TO PASS THROUGH.
ALTHOUGH I ADMIT THAT THE DOOR'S WEIGHT AND FORCE DID EXCEED MY ESTIMATION. STILL, I COULD HAVE HELD IT FOR ANOTHER THREE-POINT-SEVEN SECONDS, EASILY. IS THAT BOASTING?
PERHAPS. COME, WE CAN'T WASTE A SECOND.

I DON'T SEE ANYONE...
I DON'T LIKE IT. IT FEELS LIKE A TRAP.

WELL, LOOK, IF THIS IS THE WAY TO THE ENGINES, THERE'S NOTHING ELSE FOR IT, THEN—

WHOOOAA!
ZZRAK

STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP

WATCH HIM.

RRAAAGH!
BRVRRT

MR. AND MRS. WILLIAMS. COME HERE.

TAKE THESE. THEY'RE CALIBRATED TO MATCH OUR RIFLES.
BUT YOU HEARD THE DOCTOR—

THE DOCTOR ISN'T HERE. AND STUPIDITY IS AN EMPTY HAND.

I HAVE NO PROBLEM CONTINUING TO PROTECT YOU. BUT WOULD YOU RATHER NOT PROTECT YOURSELVES?

WE TAKE THE NEXT DOOR AT MY SIGNAL.

QI'YAH...
MERDE...
TO BE CONCLUDED!